

ACCOUNT
OF THE PROCEEDINGS
ON
LAYING THE CORNER STONE
OF
THE GIRARD COLLEGE FOR ORPHANS,
On the 4th of July, 1833:
TOGETHER WITH
THE ADDRESS
PRONOUNCED ON THAT OCCASION AT THE REQUEST OF
THE BUILDING COMMITTEE,
BY
NICHOLAS BIDDLE.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY LYDIA R. BAILEY,
NO. 26 NORTH FIFTH STREET.
1833.

*In Common Council, }
July 11th, 1833. }*

Resolved, That the Building Committee of the Girard College for Orphans, be and they are hereby instructed to prepare an account of the proceedings on the 4th inst., on the occasion of laying the Corner Stone of the College Building : and that they cause five hundred copies thereof, together with the address of N. Biddle, Esq., to be printed for distribution.

Select Council concurred.

Extract from the Minutes,

R. HARE JR., Clerk C. C.

PROCEEDINGS.

THE Building Committee of the Girard College for Orphans, having advanced with the work so far as to be prepared for laying the corner stone of the College, determined upon performing that ceremony on the 57th anniversary of the nation's independence.

A general invitation was given to the citizens through the medium of the public papers, and special notices were sent to the Mayor, Recorder, the Aldermen of the City, the Trustees of the College, the Select and Common Councils, and all other City Officers, inviting them to join in the interesting ceremonies.

In compliance with the invitations, a large concourse of the citizens assembled at the site for the College ;—the time appointed having arrived, the Building Committee called the assembly to order, and the Architect directed the workmen to proceed. The block of marble intended for the corner stone, was then raised from the ground by means of shears, and lowered into its appointed place precisely at meridian, on the 4th day of July, A. D. 1833.

The Building Committee then made the deposite in a cavity cut in the stone for the purpose, and a large block of marble was securely placed thereon.

The Architect, Thomas U. Walter, then announced to the Building Committee, that the corner stone of the "*Girard College for Orphans*," was in its proper position.

Whereupon, John Gilder Esquire, Chairman of the Building Committee, addressed the assembly as follows,

Fellow Citizens,

We have deposited in this corner stone, a copy of the Will of Stephen Girard; the coins of the United States; one five and one ten dollar note of Stephen Girard's Bank, bearing his signature; the newspapers of the day; and a scroll, containing the following

INSCRIPTION.

THIS CORNER STONE

OF THE

GIRARD COLLEGE FOR ORPHANS,

WAS LAID

ON THE FOURTH DAY OF JULY, 1833,

AT MERIDIAN,

*In presence of the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, the Select
and Common Councils of the City of Philadelphia, and
the Trustees of the Girard College for Orphans,*

BY THE

BUILDING COMMITTEE,

CONSISTING OF

JOHN GILDER, *Chairman.*

JOSHUA LIPPINCOTT,		JOSEPH WORRELL,
JOHN R. NEFF,		JOHN BYERLY,
DENNIS M'CREDY,		EPHRAIM HAINES, and
SAMUEL V. MERRICK.		

The Architect, THOMAS U. WALTER, and

The General Superintendent, JACOB SOUDER.

FINDLEY HIGHLANDS, being superintendent of the marble
work, and

JOHN P. BINNS, Clerk of the works.

CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

Mayor.—JOHN SWIFT.

Recorder.—JOSEPH M'ILVAINE.

ALDERMEN.

ROBERT WHARTON,	JOSEPH WATSON,
JOHN INSKEEP,	JOHN BINNS,
ANDREW PETTIT,	WILLIAM MILNOR,
GEORGE BARTRAM,	ANDREW GEYER,
SAMUEL BADGER,	THOMAS M'KEAN,
PETER CHRISTIAN,	JOSEPH BURDEN,
WILLIAM DUANE,	JON'N K. HASSINGER, and
MICHAEL W. ASH.	

SELECT COUNCIL.

JOSEPH R. INGERSOLL, *President.*

DANIEL GROVES,	HENRY TOLAND,
JOSHUA LIPPINCOTT,	JOHN P. WETHERILL,
MANUEL EYRE,	JOHN R. NEFF,
CHARLES MASSEY, JR.	LAWRENCE LEWIS, and
JOSEPH WORRELL,	DENNIS M'CREDY.

COMMON COUNCIL.

HENRY TROTH, *President.*

JOHN GILDER,	ROBERT M'MULLIN,
SAMUEL V. MERRICK,	JOHN J. BORIE,
EPHRAIM HAINES,	JOHN MAITLAND,
HENRY SAILOR,	SAMUEL P. WETHERILL,
JOSEPH R. CHANDLER,	ISAAC ELLIOTT,
JAMES GOWEN,	THOMAS W. MORRIS,
ROBERT M. HUSTON,	JOHN BYERLY,
JOSEPH AKEN,	DAVID LAPSLEY, JR. and
JOSEPH B. SMITH,	ROBERT TOLAND.
BENJAMIN H. YARNALL,	

TRUSTEES OF THE COLLEGE.

NICHOLAS BIDDLE, *President.*

JOHN SWIFT,	THOMAS DUNLAP,
JOSEPH R. INGERSOLL,	CHARLES BIRD,
HENRY TROTH,	JOSEPH M'ILVAINE,
GEORGE B. WOOD,	GEORGE W. TOLAND,
THOMAS M'EUN,	JOHN M. KEAGY,
WILLIAM H. KEATING,	WILLIAM M. MEREDITH,
RICHARD PRICE,	ALGERNON S. ROBERTS,
BENJAMIN W. RICHARDS,	JOHN STEELE, and
JOHN C. STOCKER.	

GEORGE WOLF, Governor of the State of Pennsylvania.
 ANDREW JACKSON, President of the United States.

STEPHEN GIRARD was born at Bordeaux, in France, on the 24th day of May 1750. His first landing in the United States was at the Port of New York; the seat of his residence and successful enterprises was the City of Philadelphia; where he died the 20th day of December, 1831, devising for the benefit of Society, the most splendid donation that philanthropy has ever devoted.

This College, a portion of the beneficence of Stephen Girard, for the education of poor male orphans, was endowed by him with

TWO MILLIONS OF DOLLARS.

MR. GILDER, then addressing the members of the Select and Common Councils, informed them, that in the performance of the duties devolving on the Building Committee, the Corner Stone of the Girard College for Orphans had now been laid in their presence; then turning to the Trustees of the College, he said, "Gentlemen, the corner stone of the Girard College for Orphans, the future management of which will be committed to your hands, has now been laid."

Whereupon, the following Address was delivered at the request of the Building Committee of the Girard College for Orphans, by Nicholas Biddle.

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ADDRESS.

FELLOW CITIZENS :—We have now witnessed the laying of the corner stone of the Girard College for Orphans. That stone, simple, massive, and enduring, fit emblem of the structure to be reared from it, and of the man whose name it bears, has been deposited in its final resting place. The earth received it. To-morrow the earth will cover it. Ours are the last eyes which shall look upon it, and hereafter it will lie in its silent repose, unmoved by all the revolutions of the changing world above it.

And yet from out that depth is to rise the spirit which may more influence the destiny of ourselves and our children, than all else the world now contains. The seed that has been planted is of the tree of knowledge—that growth which gives to existence all that renders it attractive—flowers for our early youth—fruits in maturer life, and shelter for declining years. It is that knowledge, which, trampling down in its progress the dominion of brutal force, and giving to intellect its just ascendancy, has at length become the master power of the world. No people can now be distinguished or prosperous, or truly great, but by the diffusion of knowledge—and in the stirring competition of the roused spirits of our time, the first glory and the highest success must be assigned to the best educated nation. If this be true in our relations abroad, it is far more true

at home. Our institutions have boldly ventured to place the whole power of the country in the hands of the whole people of the country, freed from all the great restraints which in other nations were deemed necessary. In doing this, their reliance is entirely on the general intelligence and education of the community, without which, such institutions can have neither permanence nor value. Their brilliant success has hitherto justified that confidence, but as our population becomes concentrated into denser masses, with more excited passions and keener wants, the corrective influence of instruction becomes daily more essential. The education then of the people, which elsewhere is desirable or useful, becomes with us essential to the enjoyment, as well as to the safety of our institutions. Our general equality of rights would be unavailing without the intelligence to understand and to defend them—our general equality of power would be dangerous, if it enabled an ignorant mass to triumph by numerical force over the superior intelligence which it envied—our universal right to political distinction, unless the people are qualified for it by education, becomes a mere abstraction, exciting only an abortive ambition. While, therefore, to be uneducated and ignorant, is in other countries a private misfortune, in ours it is a public wrong; and the great object to which statesmen should direct their efforts, is to elevate the standard of public instruction to the level—the high table land—of our institutions. It is thus that this day has been appropriately chosen for the present solemnity.

It is fit, that on the anniversary of that day when our ancestors laid the broad foundations of our public liberties—on that day when our countrymen, through-

out this prosperous empire, are enjoying the blessings which these institutions confer—we, in our sphere of duty, should commence this great work, so eminently adapted to secure and perpetuate them.

This truth no man felt with a deeper conviction than our distinguished fellow citizen, whose history, and whose design in founding this institution, may aptly occupy, for a few moments, our attention.

Of these, now that the tomb has dissipated all the illusions which once surrounded them, we can speak with the impartiality of history; and here, on this chosen spot, the scene of his future fame, we may freely bestow on his memory the homage which his unassuming nature would have shunned while living.

We all remember, and most of us knew him. Plain in appearance, simple in manners, frugal in all his habits, his long life was one unbroken succession of intense and untiring industry. Wealthy, yet without indulging in the ordinary luxuries which wealth may procure—a stranger to the social circle—indifferent to political distinction—with no apparent enjoyment except in impelling and regulating the multiplied occupations of which he was the centre—whose very relaxation was only variety of labour, he passed from youth to manhood, and finally to extreme old age, the same unchanged, unvarying model of judicious and successful enterprise. At length men began to gaze with wonder on this mysterious being, who, without any of the ordinary stimulants to exertion, urged by neither his own wants, nor the wants of others—with riches already beyond the hopes of avarice, yet persevered in this unceasing scheme of accumulation; and possessing so much, strove to possess more as anxiously as if he possessed nothing.

They did not know, that under this cold exterior, and aloof in that stern solitude of his mind, with all that seeming indifference to the world and to the world's opinions, he still felt the deepest sympathy for human affliction, and nursed a stronger, yet a far nobler and wiser ambition to benefit mankind, than ever animated the most devoted follower of that world's applause. His death first revealed that all this accumulation of his laborious and prolonged existence, was to be the inheritance of us and of our children—that for our and their comfort, the city of his adoption was to be improved and embellished, and above all, that to their advancement in science and in morals, were to be dedicated the fruits of his long years of toil.

It required the self-denial of no common mind, to resist the temptation of being himself the witness and the administrator of this bounty, and to have abstained from enjoying the applause of his grateful countrymen, who would have acknowledged with affectionate respect, the benefits which they derived from him. Yet even this secret and prospective munificence must have had its charm for a mind like his; and we may well imagine that the deep and retired stillness of his spirit was often soothed with the visions of the lasting good, and perhaps, too, of the posthumous glory, which he was preparing. Such contemplations he might well indulge, for to few have they been so fully realized. From the moment that foundation stone touched the earth, the name of Girard was beyond the reach of oblivion. He has now taken his rank among the great benefactors of mankind. From this hour, that name is destined to survive to the latest posterity, and while letters and the arts exist, he will be cited, as the man who, with

a generous spirit, and a sagacious foresight, bequeathed, for the improvement of his fellow men, the accumulated earnings of his life. He will be remembered in all future times by the emphatic title with which he chose to be designated, and with which he commences his Will—a title by which we ourselves may proudly recognise him, as “Stephen Girard, of the City of Philadelphia, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Merchant and Mariner”—the author of a more munificent act of enlightened charity than was ever performed by any other human being.

His, will indeed be the most durable basis of all human distinction—a wise benevolence in the cause of letters. The ordinary charity, which feeds or clothes the distressed, estimable as it is, relieves only the physical wants of the sufferer. But the enlightened beneficence, which looks deeper into the wants of our nature—which not merely prolongs existence, but renders that existence a blessing, by pouring into these recesses of sorrow the radiance of moral and intellectual cultivation—this it is which forms the world’s truest benefactor, and confers the most enduring of all glory—a glory the more secure, because the very objects of that benevolence are enabled to repay with fame, the kindness which sustains them.

It is not unreasonable to conjecture, that in all future times, there will probably be in existence many thousand men who will owe to Girard the greatest of all blessings, a virtuous education; men who will have been rescued from want, and perhaps from vice, and armed with power to rise to wealth and distinction. Among them will be found some of our best educated citizens, accomplished scholars, intelligent mechanics, distin-

guished artists, and prominent statesmen. In the midst of their prosperity, such men can never forget the source of it, nor will they ever cease to mingle with their prayers, and to commemorate with their labours, the name of their great benefactor. What human being can be insensible to the happiness of having caused such a succession of good through remote ages, or not feel that such applause is more grateful than all the shouts which ever rose from the bloodiest field of battle, and worth all the vulgar fame of a hundred conquests!

The general design, and the resources of the institution, are proportioned to its purposes, and characteristic of him who did nothing which he did not do well.

After the building shall have been completed, there will remain the annual income of two millions of dollars, now yielding one hundred and two thousand dollars, and if these funds should be inadequate for all the orphans applying for admission, the income of nearly all the remainder of the estate is to be appropriated to the erection of as many new buildings as his square in the city would have contained. So that in general, it may be stated with reasonable confidence, that when all the buildings are ready for the reception of the pupils, there will be available for the maintenance of the institution, an income of not less than one hundred thousand dollars, which may be increased to at least two hundred and twenty thousand dollars.

These ample funds are to be devoted to the maintenance and education of "poor male white orphan children." Of all the classes of human indigence, there are none more helpless, and none more entitled to our sympathies, than these children of misfortune. They have lost their natural protectors. The arms which have

hitherto embraced and sustained them, have been folded in death. They began life in comfort, perhaps in affluence; but now they stand alone, abandoned, and helpless, to struggle against the world's coldness, with precarious means of subsistence, with no prospect of instruction, and treading on that narrow and slippery verge which too often separates want from crime. From this friendless condition they are rescued by the benevolence of Girard, who not merely provides the means of subsistence, but redressing the wrongs of fortune, raises them at once in the scale of being, and qualifies them to be useful members of that society which they would otherwise disturb or corrupt.

How wide the limits of that benevolence may be, it is impossible to conjecture. If the imperfection of language suggests a doubt as to the degree of destitution which makes an "orphan," the greater weakness of our nature forces upon us the melancholy inquiry—what child is there who may not be a poor orphan? Who is there indeed among us whose children may not yet need the blessings of this institution? Let none of us, in the confidence of prosperity, deem his own offspring secure. Alas! all our prosperity is so vain and shadowy, and misfortune is so constantly in ambush to assail us, that it were presumptuous in any of us to suppose himself beyond the reach of vicissitudes, which would render such an institution the happiest refuge for his children. Yes, fellow citizens, this College is our own; the property of us all. It is intended to remedy misfortunes to which we are all equally liable. And it should be a source of great consolation to each of us, that if, in the ever-varying turns of human life, misfortune should overtake, and death surprise us, they who bear our

names, and are destined to be the fathers of our descendants, will here find a home where they may be prepared for future usefulness, and become in turn the protectors and support of their more helpless relatives.

Hereafter, thanks to the bounty of Girard, every father among us may, on his death-bed, enjoy the reflection, that although unprovided with fortune, there is secured to his sons that which is at once the means of fortune, and far better than the amplest fortune without it—a good education. This consideration, if any such incentive were wanting, may serve to stimulate the sense of public duty in those who administer the institution, to render it worthy of their own children.

For this purpose, happily, it is only necessary to fulfil the design of the founder, which provides ample means, and expressly enjoins the employment of them, to give every kind of liberal and useful instruction.

They would much err, who, comparing this institution with any ordinary standard, regard it as an Alms House, or a Poor House, in which a certain number of pauper boys, housed together, to be kept from harm, are to receive some hasty rudiments of instruction, and then to be thrust out on the world to make way for a similar swarm of unfortunate children. By no means. The comprehensive benevolence of Girard looked to higher and better things. It is not a poor school, nor a charity school, nor a free school, in their ordinary acceptation. It is, as he denominates it, a “College.” The peremptory prohibition that “no distinctive dress should ever be worn,” reveals his purpose that these youths shall not be designated as objects of remark or contempt by their contemporaries—that they shall be distinguished only by their conduct, and shall not wear

the livery even of charity. The instruction, too, required, is of the highest character, embracing almost every thing worthy of being studied in the circle of human knowledge. "They shall be instructed," says he, "in the various branches of a sound education, comprehending reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, geography, navigation, surveying, practical mathematics, astronomy, natural, chemical, and experimental philosophy, the French and Spanish languages—(I do not forbid, but I do not recommend the Greek and Latin languages)—and such other learning and science as the capacities of the several scholars may merit or warrant."

This excludes nothing—nay, it embraces every thing necessary to form a well educated man. How far this instruction is to be carried—whether, when the degrees of talent and disposition come to be analyzed, some are to be instructed up to the point of their appropriate capacity, while the more intelligent and more diligent are to be carried into the higher regions of science, are questions of future administrations, to be decided by experience. But it is manifest that all the means of education, thorough, perfect education, are to be provided; that every facility for the acquisition of knowledge should be at hand; nor is there any reason why the Girard College—liberally endowed beyond all example—should not be superior to any existing establishment, in the talents of its professors, or the abundance of its means of instruction; and with the blessing of God, so it shall be. There shall be collected within these walls all that the knowledge and research of men have accumulated to enlighten and improve the minds of youth. It will be the civil West Point of this country, where all the sciences which minister to men's

happiness, and all the arts of peace, may be thoroughly and practically taught. Its success will naturally render it the model for other institutions—the centre of all improvement in things taught, no less than in the art of teaching them—the nursery of instructors as well as pupils—thus not merely accomplishing the direct benefit of those to whom its instruction extends, but irradiating by its example the whole circumference of human knowledge.

To this intellectual cultivation, will be added that, without which all instruction is valueless, and all learning the mere ability for evil—that moral discipline which makes men virtuous and happy at their own firesides. “My desire is,” says he, “that all the instructors and teachers in the college shall take pains to instil into the minds of the scholars, the pure principles of morality, so that on their entrance into active life, they may, from inclination and habit, evince benevolence towards their fellow creatures, and a love of truth, sobriety, and industry.” When this harmony between the heart and the understanding ceases, mere knowledge is a curse, and men become intellectual statues, with the perfect forms of manly exterior, but cold and selfish, and worthless to the community which endures them. Our youth too will not fail to be deeply imbued with that enthusiastic devotion to republican government, and that knowledge of his public rights and duties, which should form the basis of the American character. It is thus that the founder strictly enjoins, “that by every proper means, a pure attachment to our republican institutions, and to the sacred rights of conscience as guarantied by our happy constitution,

shall be formed and fostered in the minds of the scholars.”

Nor need there be any dread that such an education will disqualify them for their pursuits in after-life. In this country all pursuits are open to all men, nor should the humblest citizen despair of the highest honours of the republic. They err who suppose that because men are instructed they may desert the ordinary walks of employment. There never can be such an over-education of the mass of the people. Men labour not for want of knowledge, but for want of bread. The cultivation of the mind, like the cultivation of the soil, only renders it more productive, and knowledge becomes the best auxiliary to industry by rendering the labourer more intelligent and more ambitious to excel. The youths thus instructed will go forth into the various pursuits of life, many of which are in their nature mechanical; but they will begin with the disposition and the power not merely to excel in them, but to rise beyond them; and they will emerge from their workshops, as their countrymen, Franklin, and Rittenhouse, and Godfrey, and Fulton, did before them, reaching all the distinctions of the state which may be honourably won by talents and character.

That the scene of so many blessings may be appropriate to them, it is intended to make this structure worthy of its great object;—worthy of the name of its founder, and of the city which he was so anxious to embellish. Among the sciences most needed in this country, where individual wealth is hastening to indulge its taste, and where every state, and city, and county, requires extensive public buildings, is architecture. Indispensable in the rudest forms of life, it becomes the

highest ornament of the most enlightened. In every stage of its progress, the style of its public works displays the character of the nation which rears them. Disproportioned and grotesque among a coarse and unlettered people—in nations more advanced, often overornamented with the gaudy profusion and the caprices of tasteless wealth—it is only when sustained by the public spirit of a community at once enlightened and generous, that architecture attains its highest glory—a refined simplicity. Of that perfection it is proposed that this structure shall present a model, the equal at least of similar works in any other country, and not unworthy of the best days of antiquity—a structure which will at once gratify the honourable pride of every citizen of the United States, and form the best study for all the branches of industry connected with architecture.

The enjoyment of so many advantages devolves on us, fellow citizens, the duty of great care and vigilance to preserve them.

After bestowing upon our city this rich inheritance, Girard adds this emphatic declaration. “In relation to the organization of the College and its appendages, I leave necessarily many details to the Mayor, Aldermen, and Citizens of Philadelphia, and I do so with the more confidence, as, from the nature of my bequests, and the benefit to result from them, I trust that my fellow citizens of Philadelphia will observe and evince special care and anxiety in selecting members for their City Councils, and other agents.”

That the generous confidence with which he has thus committed to us the execution of his great designs, should never be betrayed, we owe equally to the name of the founder and to the interests of our posterity; as

the whole value of this institution will depend entirely on the administration of it. For myself and my colleagues, to whom the high honour has been assigned of sharing in that administration, I can only say, fellow citizens, that we have assumed the trust with the deepest sense of its responsibility, and a determination to execute it in the spirit of enlightened benevolence which animated the founder; and we shall in our turn retire from it, with the hope that our fair city may always find successors, who, to equal zeal, add greater ability to serve it.

Under such auspices, we confidently trust that all the expectations of the founder will be realized. With this delightful anticipation, we now invoke the blessing of God on this great undertaking.

In the name of *Stephen Girard, of the City of Philadelphia, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Merchant and Mariner*, we lay the foundation of this *Girard College for Orphans*. We dedicate it to the cause of CHARITY, which not only feeds and clothes the destitute, but wisely confers the greatest blessings on the greatest sufferers;

To the cause of *Education*, which gives to human life its chief value;

To the cause of *Morals*, without which knowledge were worse than unavailing; and finally,

To the cause of our *Country*, whose service is the noblest object to which knowledge and morals can be devoted.

Long may this structure stand, in its majestic simplicity, the pride and admiration of our latest posterity; long may it continue to yield its annual harvests of educated and moral citizens, to adorn and to defend our

country. Long may each successive age enjoy its still increasing benefits, when time shall have filled its halls with the memory of the mighty dead who have been reared within them, and shed over its outward beauty the mellowing hues of a thousand years of renown.

The Address being concluded, the company partook of a collation prepared under the direction of the Building Committee, and adjourned.

Sketch of the Proposed Building.

The College is situated on a tract of land containing forty-five acres, formerly known by the name of Peel Hall, situated on the Ridge Road, $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the City. This estate was purchased from Mr. William Parker, by Mr. Girard, a short time before his death, for the purposes of the College.

The building is peripteral, being 160 feet front, by 217 feet on the flank, including the porticoes.

The columns are of the Corinthian order—6 feet in diameter at the base, and 54 feet 6 inches high, including capitals and bases. They stand on a basement, composed of 12 steps surrounding the whole building. The passage between the columns and the walls of the cell is 15 feet in width.

All the columns, entablature, and pediment, are to be of white, and the cell of light blue, marble. The floors and stairways are also to be of marble.

The vestibules are each 26 by 48 feet.

Each story contains four rooms 50 feet square in the clear.

The whole building is to be heated by means of furnaces placed in the cellar.

The College is built parallel with the city streets, fronting the south. The land at the base of the building is 26 feet above the reservoir on Fair Mount. The whole height of the edifice is 97 feet, making the elevation of the roof 123 feet above the said reservoir.

